

PERS: Tho, Nguyen Huu
RANDOLPH
CIA 5-03.2

TEXT OF GERMAN INTERVIEW WITH NGUYEN HUU THO

Cologne RHEINISCHER MERKUR 16 July 1965--G-

(Exclusive interview with NFLSV leader Nguyen Huu Tho by Randolph Braumann, RHEINISCHER MERKUR special correspondent in Saigon).

(Text). Interviews with the highly suspicious Viet Cong leaders are adventurous affairs in which Western journalists are not often successful.

Question: Are you Communist?

Answer: No, I am socialist.

Question: Was the NFLSV founded on the initiative or by order of Hanoi?

Answer: No. Officially--that is, with a specific program--the front was established on 20 December 1960. In reality it existed before that date. For instance, the Saigon-Cholon committee was established as early as 1950 to safeguard the observance of the Geneva resolutions and the development of free democratic rights. Leading personalities of the cultural life of Saigon, writers, politicians, lawyers, and physicians were members of the committee from the beginning. In 1960 we were forced to start the revolution because Diem burned entire suburbs of Saigon in the fight against the Binh-Xuyen sect.

Question: Is there today a connection with North Vietnam. How, otherwise, could supplies (nachschub) be brought in?

Answer: We have to feed at least 1 million people--our soldiers and their families. That is the simple answer. How should we get supplies for a million people over hundreds and thousands of kilometers? We feed ourselves in the country. A large section of South Vietnam already has been liberated, and we control other large areas. We take the weapons from the national army or we produce them ourselves.

Question: However, you obtain additional materials, for instance heavy arms, from North Vietnam and China?

Answer: We never asked for help from outside, not even from China.

Question: When will you have attained your objective?

Answer: When the last American has left Saigon.

Question: Every day more Americans arrive. What will you do if the United States is willing to fight as in Korea?

Answer: The Americans must know that they need 2 million soldiers to enforce their aims.

Question: May I assume that you have objectives other than driving out the Americans?

Answer: Our number one plan is land reform. The peasants must be given land. In the liberated territories of South Vietnam we have distributed 2 million hectares so far. We do not demand any systematic confiscation, and we even advocate maintaining existing ownership rights. Of course, that does not apply to the properties of the traitors. Property owners who do not support the U.S. puppets are our friends.

We have a positive view toward legitimate property rights of foreigners, and we favor foreign investments. We demand democratic freedom for everybody--freedom of speech and movement, and right of assembly. Politically we want a neutral South Vietnam free of all alliances.

Question: Do you think that all Vietnamese people are convinced of the sincerity of your objectives, even after the last bloody attempts?

Answer: Not all people, but the majority of them.

Question: If you do not make headway by military operations, will you then consider negotiations with the Americans?

Answer: No.

Question: You will go on fighting in any case?

Answer: Yes.

The last question to Nguyen Huu Tho reads: "What proposals does the 'Freedom of Action League, set up by the liberation front, have regarding establishing contact with all political groups of South Vietnam?"

Answer: "We are not claiming that we will win the war alone or want to form a government alone. We are prepared to forget the past and the present. We will not refuse friendship even to those officers serving with the Americans, if they only repent and find the way back to the fatherland.

As for the United Action League (as printed--ed.), it is prepared to negotiate with all parties, groups, sects, and influential patriots. It will not question their political trends and not even their past political activity. It wants only a peaceful solution leading to national independence, democracy, and neutrality. Domestic affairs must be settled by the South Vietnamese without external interference. This is possible only if all U.S. soldiers are withdrawn. Nor do the league and the liberation front oppose an international conference, but this conference should restrict itself to making proposals. The South Vietnamese alone are qualified for (every) agreement, and qualified to implement all decisions."

(Editor's note: The same issue of RHEINISCHER MERKUR carries another article by Randolph Braumann in which Braumann quotes Thich Tam Chau, "one of the two leaders besides Thich Tri Quang of the 'Institute for the Dissemination of Dharma,'" as saying that "it is completely false to ask whether the Viet Cong have infiltrated the Buddhists, only the Buddhists. They have infiltrated every organization in Vietnam--the military, the churches, the administration, and the government. This is true; it is so, and the government must confirm it. The communists have infiltrated everything; they have access everywhere, even to the Vietnamese employees of the U.S. service /as printed--ed./."

(Braumann adds that "the manager of the hotel who greeted me with smooth subservience and a frozen smile, in order to remit a letter to Nguyen Huu Tho, is one of the directors of psychological warfare in Saigon. He is a component, a nameless one, in this mighty apparatus of the Viet Cong secret service, which outdoes all agents of the intelligence service, of the CIA, and even of Moscow, in skill and brutality.")

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